

...that two years later there still have been no prosecutions stemming from Nigeria's presidential post-election violence that killed more than 800?

In April 2011, immediately following the re-election of President Goodluck Jonathan, more than 800 people were killed and 65,000 displaced in three days of rioting in Nigeria's northern states. Protests by supporters of the main opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari -- a northern Muslim who lost the presidential election, quickly turned to violence against Christians who were thought to be sympathetic to President Jonathan, a Christian. While political issues sparked the violence, its consequences were severe violations of religious freedom, including individuals killed because of their religious identity and churches and mosques attacked. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) reported that at least 187 people were killed, 243 people injured, and more than 430 churches burned or destroyed. Some of the worst post-election violence between Muslims and Christians occurred in Kaduna State. Human Rights Watch reports that more than 500 were killed in Kaduna State, the vast majority of whom were Muslims.

Despite the number of deaths, no prosecutions were undertaken at the federal or state level against the perpetrators of violence. Federal-state jurisdictional disputes and a lack of political will continue to pose a challenge to address the violence, its underlying causes and lack of prosecutions. The inaction of the Nigerian government at all levels fosters a climate of impunity and signals that future violence will go unpunished.

Since 1999, sectarian and inter-communal violence in Nigeria has resulted in more than 14,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands displaced, with thousands of churches, mosques, businesses, vehicles, private homes, and other structures destroyed. Almost universally, individuals identified as perpetrators have not been prosecuted. Of the more than 14,000 sectarian deaths, USCIRF has confirmed that fewer than 200 individuals have been prosecuted for their involvement in sectarian violence, despite the fact that video and photographic evidence of sectarian conflicts that identify perpetrators are on the internet.

In response to religion-related violence, federal and state officials have formed more than a dozen commissions of inquiry to review the causes of the violence and make recommendations to prevent further violence. However, commission recommendations rarely are implemented, and these commissions often fault the government for failing to implement the recommendations put forth by previous commissions.